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TAGS: [PGOV](#) [ECOWAS](#) [PREL](#) [KDEM](#) [GV](#) [NI](#)
SUBJECT: NIGERIA, ECOWAS TO STAND FIRM ON GUINEA

REF: 08 ABUJA 2518

Classified By: Political Counselor Walter Pflaumer for reasons 1.4. (b & d).

11. (SBU) SUMMARY: On January 13, Poloff met with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs' ECOWAS Desk Officer, B.A. Nurudeen to discuss Nigeria's and ECOWAS' stance toward the coup in Guinea after the January 10 summit of regional Heads of State. Nurudeen emphasized Nigeria's commitment to working within ECOWAS as it urges Guinea's military leaders to schedule elections at the soonest possible opportunity, preferably within 2009. He said that only mild political sanctions would be placed on Guinea for now, and could not say what might trigger a stronger, more substantive response should an elections timetable become protracted. Finally, he also described the circumstances under which Nigeria assumed ECOWAS' mantle of leadership -- which appears to have been something the GON neither sought nor wants. END SUMMARY.

12. (SBU) On January 13, subsequent to the January 10 Summit of ECOWAS Heads of State, the MFA's ECOWAS Desk Officer B.A. Nurudeen described Nigeria's stance toward Guinea as being one of "no tolerance" for the recent coup, and said that the GON would continue to use ECOWAS as the primary vehicle through which it would deal with Guinea. Nigeria's actions would follow ECOWAS' political protocols, which call for "zero tolerance" for subversion of the democratic process in member states; suspension from Head of State-level meetings, for now, is as far as ECOWAS is willing to go in terms of political sanctions. Nigeria would treat the National Council for Democracy and Development's (CNDD) promises to move rapidly toward elections, and their promises not to contest in those elections once they were held, as having been made in good faith. Nigeria is calling for a 6-12 month election timetable, subsequent to the completion of a review of the Constitution, which he said was highly unpopular among ordinary Guineans. When asked if former Nigerian President Ibrahim Badamasi Babangida's statements, made while serving as Yar'Adua's envoy, sent a mixed message (he said the coup plotters are "patriots," resulting in January 8 headlines such as the Daily Trust's "IBB Endorses Coup in Guinea"), Nurudeen said that Babangida's words had been taken out of context and merely reflected his personal sympathies, not the GON's official stand.

13. (SBU) Nurudeen also described the circumstances under which Nigeria was given Chairmanship of the Heads of State

Authority (reftel). Following Burkina Faso's term in the seat, which is widely viewed as having been effective and robust, it was expected that Liberia or Sierra Leone would take the position, but both begged off. After discussions "dragged on" and it was clear that no other anglophone country would step up, Nurudeen said the Chairmanship was "imposed" on Nigeria. Nurudeen could not articulate what President Yar'Adua's plans might be for ECOWAS, and said that no additional MFA staff have yet been detailed to help plan the GON's next steps -- in fact, Nurudeen gave the appearance that assigning additional staff had not even occurred to anyone in the MFA.

¶4. (C) COMMENT: Nigeria seems to have no sticks, and few carrots, to offer Guinea. The two countries have little trade between them, and francophone Senegal's expressions of support will echo in Conakry much louder than anglophone Nigeria's disapproval. ECOWAS' track record of attempting to apply its "zero tolerance" policy in situations of electoral fraud and coups is extremely uneven. Given widespread unofficial sentiment that actions in Guinea were understandable, if not laudable, in light of its recent history, we expect ECOWAS to be very patient, if not indulgent, should the CNDD delay elections into 2010 and beyond.

¶5. (C) COMMENT CONTINUED: If ECOWAS is looking to the GON, in its role as the Chairman of the Heads of State Authority, to energize ECOWAS and drive its agenda, the Community is in for a moribund year. The achievements of Yar'Adua -- popularly known as Baba Go-Slow -- in pursuing his own agenda have thus

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far been sparse; one would expect even less in pursuit of a role he does not want and, nearly a month into his term, still has not begun to plan for. END COMMENT.

¶6. (U) This cable was coordinated with Consulate Lagos.
Piascik